

## Sermon for the Transfiguration of our Lord – Matthew 17:1-9

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” Why did He take them there? What was He going to show them? Jesus wanted to give Peter, James, and John a glimpse of the last day: where Christ would shine brightly in the glory of His Divinity while still being in His Human Body.

He led them up the mountain so that He might reveal to them Who the Son of Man is and Whose Son He is. Not long before this, Jesus asked these very disciples, among the others, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” to which they replied that some say Elijah, some others say Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. But now Jesus shows them He was not Elijah, but the God of Elijah. He was not Jeremiah, but God that sanctified Jeremiah in his mother’s womb. He was not one of the prophets, but the Lord of the prophets, and He sent them. He showed them He was the Creator of heaven and earth, and the Lord of the living and of the dead.

But why now? Why did Jesus show the glory and majesty of God in His Transfiguration now? All good things in their time, right? After all, at His Resurrection, Jesus would proceed out of the tomb in glory and white raiment. And when He comes to judge the living and the dead, He’ll look the same. But why show His Glory now?

Jesus took them up to the high mountain that He might show the glory of His Divinity, that He might declare Himself Redeemer of Israel as the prophets foretold, so that they would not be scandalized when they saw the other crucial part of His Glory. That Glory is the one found in His cross. He would suffer for our sakes and for our sins in His human nature. The disciples knew He was a man. They may not have known yet that He was true God. They knew Him as the son of Mary, and as a man sharing in their daily world. They knew that when hungry, He ate; when thirsty, He drank; after He worked and sweated, He rested; when tired, He slept. He had fears and hopes. But on this mountain, Jesus revealed that He is the Son of God, yes, God Himself.

He took them to the mountain to show them His Kingdom, before they witnessed His suffering and death. He showed them His Glory before His shame. He was transfigured before them so that when He was arrested, condemned, and crucified, it was not due to powerlessness, but because it pleased Him to suffer for the salvation of the world.

He took them to the mountain and was transfigured before them, so that they would know His glory and majesty existed before His Resurrection, and not a reward thereof. Jesus is God from the beginning and for eternity along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Glory of His Divinity, which was hidden and veiled in His humanity was revealed to the Apostles on the mountain. They saw His face shining as the sun and His clothes white as snow.

“And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.” What did they say? What were these prophets and the One whom they prophesied speaking about? They gave thanks to Him that their words had been fulfilled. They adored Him for the salvation He would accomplish in the world for all mankind by His Exodus on the Cross. Moses and Elijah were filled with joy! Peter, James, and John were filled with joy! The Prophets rejoiced because they had seen God’s humanity which they had

not known! The Apostles rejoiced because they had seen in this Man God which they had not known like this before! The Prophets looked at the Apostles. The Apostles looked at the Prophets. The princes of the Old Testament looked upon the princes of the New. Moses looked at Peter. One had divided the Red Sea so that God's people might walk through the midst of the waves. The other proclaimed that passing through the waters of Holy Baptism now saves you. The one built a tabernacle for God to dwell in. The other's confession of God dwelling in Christ is what the church is built upon. Prophets and Apostles find their ultimate camaraderie in the Savior who fulfills the message of both.

So it's no wonder that Peter said, "Lord, it is good that we are here." But is it really good? If they stayed there, who would confirm the tidings of the angels? Who would fulfill the words of the prophets? Who would fulfill the words, "They have pierced my hands and my feet ... They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots ... They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink"? If they stayed, who would tear up indictment against Adam and pay his debt? Who would give him back his garment of glory? How would the Church be built upon Jesus' teaching to the Apostles? How would this Church receive the Keys to the Kingdom to bind and loose sins?

But Peter presses the issue, "If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Jesus sent the Apostles to build the Church in the world. Peter wishes to build 3 dwellings on a mountain so that He may continually speak with Christ and the Prophets. But the Lord immediately shows that He has no need of dwelling places. The Lord lived in a cloud in the wilderness for 40 years. Peter, Behold a Dwelling Place built without hands; a Dwelling Place that protects from all harm, that is without darkness; a Dwelling Place that shines as the sun!

The events of Christ's life teach us that He is true God and true man. If He was not man, how did Mary give birth to Him? If He was not true God, why did Gabriel call Him "Lord"? If He was not man, who was laid in a manger? If He was not true God, why did the angels glorify Him? If He was not man, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes? If He was not God, who did the shepherds adore? If He was not man, why did Simeon take Him in his arms? If He was not God, to whom to Simeon request of Him that he may "depart in peace"?

As true man Jesus was baptized by John, fasted and hungered in the wilderness, slept in a boat, ate with Simon the Pharisee, and wept at Lazarus' tomb. And as true God, the Father spoke of Him: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." As true God He overcame the devil's temptations, He rebuked the winds and the waves of the sea, He forgave the sinful woman her transgressions, and He raised Lazarus from the dead.

If He was not true man, who was beaten and scourged? If He was not true God, who restored the ear Peter had cut off? If He were not true man, whose face was spat upon? If He was not true God, who breathed the Holy Spirit upon the face of the Apostles? If He were not true man, who hung upon the cross? If He were not God, who caused the earth quake at the crucifixion? If He were not true man, who called out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" If He were not true God, who said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"? If He was not true man, who hung upon the cross with thieves? If He were not true God, who promised the penitent thief, "Today you will be with Me in paradise"? If He were not true man, whose side was pierced by a spear so that water and blood flowed out? If He was not true God, who broke the gates of hell and burst its iron bars? If He was not a man, who did the Apostles see in the upper room? If He was not true God, how did He enter the room when the doors were locked? If He was not true man, whose wounds did Thomas feel? If He were not true God, why did Thomas say, "My Lord and My God"?

By now I think you probably get the point: Jesus Christ is true God and true man. But what does this mean for us? After Jesus was transfigured, after the disciples saw the whole Glory of God, all the time concealed in His humanity, suddenly the cloud, the prophets, and the Father's booming voice were all gone. And they saw no one but Jesus only. Jesus only. We've convinced ourselves that there's so much more to life than Jesus, and so much else that will heal our wounds and so much more that will fill our emptiness. So we seek after riches and relationships, certain that they will do the trick, while Christ and His Word are shoved to the side.

But after we've tangled ourselves in lust, lies, selfishness, greed, and hurting our loved ones closest to us, we still belong to Jesus only. How is this possible? Because as true man, He died in our place and as true God He overcame death for you. He washed you in His Word and water in Holy Baptism and made you His own. Jesus only. And while the changes and chances of this world leave lots of uncertainty, in Jesus only there is no uncertainty. In Jesus only, God the Father says of you: "This is my beloved child in whom I am well-pleased." Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen. ✂BJF✂